

43rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT • ASSEMBLY DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR

Contact: Rebekah Sweeney

(608) 266-3790

For Immediate Release: June 16, 2015

Dem Members of Public Benefit Reform Committee Introduce FoodShare Plan to "Grow Wisconsin"

MADISON – State Representatives Andy Jorgensen (D-Milton), Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit), Lisa Subeck (D-Madison), Deb Kolste (D-Janesville), and Evan Goyke (D-Milwaukee) – the Democratic members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform - today shared their "Grow Wisconsin" initiative, a plan to encourage and enable FoodShare enrollees to purchase healthy foods for their families while supporting economic gains in Wisconsin's agricultural and retail industries.

"In this case, doing what's best for our neighbors in need is also what's best for our economy," said Jorgensen. "It's a win-win for Wisconsin, and we hope to have strong bipartisan support."

Earlier this session, Republicans on the Public Benefit Reform Committee advanced legislation creating a severely limited and ill-conceived list of foods which FoodShare recipients could buy.

In contrast, the "Grow Wisconsin" initiative uses positive reinforcement, in the form of additional dollars, to support the purchase of the most nutritious food options. Under the Assembly Democrats' plan, individuals could double their FoodShare purchasing power for Wisconsin-grown fruits, vegetables, and meats, or Wisconsin-made dairy products, either at farmers' markets or grocery stores already authorized to participate in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

"We know people want the best foods for their families, but the limited nature of FoodShare can make the healthiest choices difficult to make," said Jorgensen. "We're trying to offer our neighbors a hand up, and to boost Wisconsin businesses at the same time."

The authors are launching "Grow Wisconsin" as a pilot program in Milwaukee, Dane, and Rock Counties, a move which keeps initial costs for the program low, while data can be gathered on its use. A similar program in Michigan, called "Double Up Food Bucks" has met with tremendous success.

Rep. Jorgensen, Spreitzer, Subeck, Kolste, and Goyke will be reaching out to colleagues, trying to garner support for the "Grow Wisconsin" initiative through the end of this month, and expect to formally introduce the bill early in July.

###